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Lack of energy policy threatens domestic jobs

By REP. BOB BEAUPREZ

THERE'S been a lot of talk lately about the practice of "outsourcing" or "off-shoring" of jobs. Whatever term you use, the definition is the same — sending American jobs to foreign countries. Some Democrats seem particularly eager to make this subject a central one for the next seven months.

At a time when Americans are paying record-high prices for gasoline at the pump, I relish the opportunity to have this debate on outsourcing.

Through their opposition to a comprehensive national energy policy, I believe a very strong case can be made that the Democrats are unwittingly themselves the biggest proponents of outsourcing.

Their refusal to work with President Bush and the Republican majority in Congress to pass a national energy plan has created and nurtured an environment that is hostile to job creation and makes our nation more reliant on foreign sources of oil.

Since 2001, the Republican-led House has passed comprehensive energy legislation three times. Unfortunately, the Senate has failed to follow suit, and this nation has no energy policy as a result.

The ramifications of the Senate's failure are staggering. During that time, gas prices have increased to all-time highs, U.S. imports of oil have increased 10 percent, the price of oil has increased 65 percent and the cost of natural gas has increased a whopping 92 percent.

According to the Department of Commerce, the United States loses 12,389 jobs for every billion dollars spent on imported oil. That means we are "off-shoring" 1.7 million jobs for oil yearly.

Not only have the Democrats in the Senate blocked all efforts to legislate an energy policy, they have encouraged their surrogates to litigate their true agenda. Time and time again, reasonable efforts to increase domestic production have been met with radical and obstructionist litigation.

We're not just talking about drilling for oil in Alaska. Their allies have litigated to prevent the development of clean natural gas, low-sulfur coal, hydro-electric energy and even wind power projects. This policy, or lack thereof, is a recipe for economic disaster and a threat to our national security on several levels.

The House-passed energy bill, on the other hand, is estimated to produce 838,500 good-paying jobs. It has a great deal of incentives for cleaner fuels, renewable energy and tough environmental standards.

By reducing our dependence on foreign sources of energy, we strengthen not only our economic security but also our national security. I don't know about you, but having our energy resources controlled by Saudi Arabia, Russia, even Canada, makes me nervous. The last time we were this dependent on foreign oil, OPEC disrupted our supply and we ended up with gas rationing and three-hour waits at service stations. We don't need to go there again.

I look forward to a discussion about outsourcing. It will probably be one of the more prominent issues in this election season, and it should be.

The United States has always been a world leader when it comes to the steady increase of better-paying jobs and improved standards of living. That's why we consume 25 percent of the world's energy yet we create 33 percent of the world's economic output.

U.S. ingenuity and 21st-century technologies can and must combine to produce more domestic energy.

Our history as a nation proves that given the tools, American workers can accomplish anything. One of the most critical tools they need right now is affordable, reliable and safe supplies of energy with which to create good-paying jobs. It's time for the Congress to do its job and pass a national energy bill.

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